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Agenda item 15

CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF SLAVERY

Written statement submitted by Human Rights Advocates, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (Category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[10 August 1995]

1. Considering the report of the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1995/28), and the draft programme of action for the prevention of trafficking in persons and the exploitation of the prostitution of others (resolution 1994/5, sect. V), Human Rights Advocates would like to focus on a few especially important areas regarding the world's tragic exploitation of children. The three areas in which we propose suggestions regarding child prostitution are age-monitoring, education and rehabilitation.

Age-monitoring

2. Age-monitoring involves serious issues regarding the meaning of the word "child". We agree that children under age 18 are in need of protection. We would like to stress, however, that children 14 years old and younger need very special protection and nurturing. To deny that need for those who have not yet reached even an age of physical maturity would be inexcusable. By lack of effective monitoring and control, to allow those under 14 to suffer exploitation and prostitution is of grave concern to our organization.

3. Although the current draft programme of action for the prevention of trafficking in persons and the exploitation of the prostitution of others contains provisions for general thematic and country/regional studies on the problems of exploitation and traffic, and attention was also given to the need for multilateral cooperation and data-sharing regarding suspected offenders, we would like to emphasize that, first and foremost, we should monitor the identity and ages of the children involved. Although effective age-monitoring would be a complex and lengthy task, it is integral that, along with the child's inherent right to name and nationality (art. 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child), he/she must also maintain a registered age. The immense difficulty in identifying the age of a child to determine if, as a victim, he/she was considered a "child" (especially as defined above) when the offence occurred is a great impediment to the process of apprehending and prosecuting all perpetrators involved, from the offender to the procurer or brothel-owner. We would suggest that the Sub-Commission include a clause in its draft programme of action inviting States to implement technical measures to track not only the names, but also the ages of all their child nationals.

Education

4. With regard to the need for widespread education as to the ever-present risk of sexual exploitation, we note that considerable attention has been given to children's education regarding protection of their bodies, sexually transmitted diseases, literacy promotion, and occupation. Additional mention is made of the need to educate social workers and law enforcement officials. Broad and challenging indeed are such issues, yet we support the need for additional considerations. Child education is, of course, a necessary step. Still, is it not important that there be a supplemental form of parental education? In fact, in many countries where child prostitution is a grave issue, it is often the parents who either sell their children to a procurer, or use other methods to force them into prostitution. As facilitators of child prostitution, or even as inhabitants of a society in which children may fall prey to such practices, parents are in great need of education. We believe it would be of benefit to all involved if a joint, family education programme could be suggested to States in which child prostitution is a prevalent social phenomenon.

Rehabilitation

5. Recognizing the recommendation for the creation of programmes in order to rehabilitate and reintegrate victims of child prostitution into society (resolution 1994/5), we would like to support and re-enforce the need for rehabilitation programmes specifically designed for children, as opposed to including them in the adult programmes. Regarding this issue, we note that children are by far the most vulnerable, impressionable, and innocent victims who suffer from the irreparable aftermath of sexual exploitation, thus their rehabilitation and nurturing needs are distinct from others, as they require far more attention and care. Additionally, we kindly propose a provision for long-term rehabilitation for the child, with the possible request to States to include, in their reports to the Secretary-General, information about the long-term effects of their child rehabilitation and support programmes. The atrocities experienced by these children are severely emotionally, physically and psychologically damaging, hence we must ensure that assistance programmes are not temporary or short term, but that they effectively cover the period of the child's full development.

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